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Infant Immunization Week: Protecting Infants from Preventable Diseases

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Capt. Joseph McQuade, Naval Hospital Jacksonville Public Health Director

To mark [National Infant Immunization Week](#) (April 21-28), I'd like to call attention to the importance of protecting infants from vaccine-preventative diseases.

To address the myths and misinformation about vaccine safety that often confuse parents, know that the United States currently has the safest, most effective vaccine supply in history. Years of testing are required by law before a vaccine is licensed and they are continually monitored for safety and effectiveness. While vaccines can cause side effects—like all medications—serious side effects are extremely rare. And the benefits of getting vaccinated far outweigh possible side efforts for almost all children.

Vaccines can protect infants and children from 14 diseases. Thanks to vaccines, some diseases are almost gone in the United States. The elimination of polio and smallpox are powerful examples of why we vaccinate.

Immunization can also save families time and money. Children with vaccine-preventable diseases may not be allowed to go to school. Some vaccine-preventable diseases require hospitalization, cause permanent disabilities and can also take a financial toll.

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Lt. Cmdr. Michelle Kee, mother of 6-month-old Cameron Kee, holds her infant as Hospitalman Robert Hinds gives an immunization shot. National Infant Immunization Week—sponsored by the World Health Organization—takes place from April 20 to 27. This annual observance seeks to improve the health of children age two and younger. (U.S. Navy photo by Jacob Sippel/Released)

Immunization also protects future generations. Birth defects associated with the rubella virus, also known as German measles, are no longer seen in the United States. By continuing to vaccinate now, some of today’s diseases will no longer be around to harm our children...our grandchildren...and their grandchildren.

So what happens if we stop vaccinating? By taking away the protection, more and more people would be infected, become sick and spread disease to others. We would undo the progress we have made over the years with the elimination of diseases. A 2010 outbreak of pertussis—whooping cough—killed 10 infants in California alone.

Bottom line: vaccines save lives!

For a schedule of recommended vaccines for adolescents, click [here](#).

To check out a list of CDC adolescent vaccination resources, click [here](#).

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